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 RUQMG/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5344
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 7593
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1640
 RUQMOD/AMEMBASSY DOHA 430
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALAM 7216
 RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 895
 RUQMKW/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 7665
 RUEHLD/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5597
 RUQMAM/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 803
 RUQMNT/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 492
 RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1671
 RUOKKR/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 2706
 BT
 C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0514 COMBINED SECTION

EXDIS

E.O. 12065: GDS 1/22/88 (DILLON, ROBERT S.) OR-M

TAGS: OREP (PERCY, CHARLES H.) LE

SUBJECT CODEL PERCY: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FUAD BOUTROS

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. IMMEDIATE AFTER ARRIVAL ON EVENING OF JAN 19, SENATOR
 PERCY, ACCOMPANIED BY SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
 STAFFER BANNERMAN AND AMBASSADOR DILLON, PAID BRIEF FORMAL
 CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER FUAD BOUTROS AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE.

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SHORTLY AFTER CALL, BOUTROS JOINED THE SENATOR FOR AN INFORMAL DINNER AND DISCUSSION AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. THE CONVERSATION WAS EXTREMELY FRIENDLY AND MUCH OF IT WAS TAKEN UP WITH BOUTROS' ATTEMPT TO SET HISTORIC CONTEXT FOR LEBANON'S PRESENT SITUATION. BOUTROS TOUCHED ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

3. SYRIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON: BOUTROS AGREED PASSIONATELY THAT THE PRESENCE OF SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON, WHICH HAD TURNED INTO AN "OCCUPATION", WAS NOW THE COUNTRY'S CENTRAL PROBLEM. HE REVIEWED IN SOME DETAIL THE HISTORY OF HOW THAT INTERVENTION HAD COME ABOUT. HE LAID SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SYRIAN PRESENCE ON THE US. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BY THE TIME THEN PRESIDENT FRANJIAH AND PRIME MINISTER KARAMI AGREED TO INVITE SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN 1975 TO SAVE THE CHRISTIANS FROM BEING OVERRUN BY LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIAN FORCES THERE WAS PROBABLY NO CHOICE FOR THE US BUT TO GO ALONG. HIS INDICTMENT OF THE US, HOWEVER, WAS IN ITS FAILURE TO ACT SOONER AND PARTICULARLY IN ITS FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THAT SYRIAN WAS HELPING CREATE THE VERY SITUATION WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY REQUIRED ITS INTERVENTION. HE WAS NOT SPECIFIC ABOUT HOW THE US SHOULD HAVE PREVENTED SYRIAN ACTIONS BUT THE THRUST OF HIS ARGUMENT WAS THAT DECISIVE US-WESTERN POWER ACTION IN THE EARLY DAYS OF LEBANON'S CIVIL WAR COULD HAVE PREVENTED LATER TRAGEDIES.

4. WHEN THE SENATOR ASKED WHETHER THE GOL HAD EVER CALLED OPENLY FOR THE DEPARTURE OF THE SYRIANS, BOUTROS STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEBANESE WORKING PAPER. IN THAT PAPER, WHICH HAD THE SIGNATURE OF LEBANON'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY OF PRIME MINISTER WAZZAN, THE COUNTRY'S SENIOR MUSLIM LEADER, A TIMETABLE FOR THE DEPARTURE OF THE SYRIANS WITHIN ONE YEAR WAS CLEARLY LAID DOWN. THE SYRIANS HAD BEEN SO UPSET BY THIS PAPER THAT THEY HAD AVOIDED ALL SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPTS TO DISCUSS IT, AND HAD INSTRUCTED THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT TO DEMAND THAT PRIME MINISTER WAZZAN WITHDRAW IT. THEY WERE NOT, BOUTROS OBSERVED, INTERESTED IN LEAVING LEBANON UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. HE WAS NOT SANGUINE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF GETTING THE SYRIANS TO LEAVE. AS HE PUT IT, THE SYRIANS ARE

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THEMSELVES INVOLVED IN CRATEING THE CONDITIONS WHICH MAKE THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE NECESSARY, OR AT LEAST PLAUSIBLE. BUT HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A COMBINATION OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE AND PERHAPS GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES IN SYRIA MIGHT EVENTUALLY BRING ABOUT THEIR DEPARTURE.

5. PALESTINIAN ISSUE: BOUTROS TOLD THE SENATOR THAT THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE WAS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE LEBANESE PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH THE SOLUTION OF THE LEBANESE PROBLEM COULD NOT AWAIT THE SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, AND IT WOULD DEVASTATE LEBANESE MORALE TO SUGGEST THERE WAS SUCH A DIRECT LINK, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE WAS NO HOPE FOR DEFINITIVE SOLUTION OF LABANON'S BROUBLES WITHOUT PROGRESS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE. IN THIS CONTEXT HE URGED THAT THE US PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN SEEKING A SOLUTION INCLUDING DIRECT CONTACTS WITH REPRESENTATIVE PALESTINIAN LEADERS, THE MOST IMPORTANT OF WHO WERE IN THE PLO. HE BELIEVED THAT THE RANGE OF PROBLEMS BEING ADDRESSED IN THE AUTONOMY TALKS BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL WAS TOO NARROW TO OFFER ANY HOPE THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD JOIN. HE HOPED THAT AFTER APRIL THE SCOPE OF THE TALKS COULD BE BROADENED, PERPHAS WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FAHD PLAN AS A FRAMEWORK SO THAT THE REAL PROBLEM OF THE AREA COULD BE DISCUSSED. HE DID NOT EXPECT A SUDDEN REORIENTATION OF EGYPT'S POLICIES BUT CLEARLY THOUGHT EGYPT WOULD SOMEHOW REJOIN THE ARAB WORLD IN THE MONTHS FOLLOWING THE RETURN OF THE SINAI.

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6. LEBANON'S CENTRAL GOVERNMENT: BOUTROS ACKNOWLEDGED THE WEAKNESS OF LEBANON'S CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM THE SENATOR ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF STRENGTHENING THE ARMY, HE OBSERVED THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY REFLECTED ALL THE DIVISIONS OF THE NATION. IF THE ARMY WERE 200,000 MEN INSTEAD OF 20,000 IT WOULD STILL BE HAMSTRUNG BY THOSE DIVISIONS. THEREFORE, THE REAL SOLUTION WAS TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL RECONCILIATION FREE FROM FOREIGN PRESSURES WHILE OF COURSE CONTINUING TO STRENGTHEN THE ARMY AND THE SECURITY FORCES. HE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE COULD BE NO THOUGHT OF SIMPLY CONSTRUCTING A LEBANESE ARMY AND THEN USING IT

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AS THE INSTRUMENT TO UNIFY THE COUNTRY BY FORCE. THAT
WOULD NOT WORK.

7. ARAB FOLLOW UP COMMITTEE: IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION,
BOUTROS NOTED THAT THE ARAB FOLLOW UP COMMITTEE HAD
FAILED TO MEET ON THE 18TH BECAUSE SAUDI ARABIA AND
KUWAIT HAD NOT WISHED TO RISK A CONFRONTATION WITH THE
SYRIANS AND THE PALESTINIANS OVER THE QUESTION OF CONTROL
OF LEBANESE PORTS AND COASTLINE. HE THOUGHT THAT THE
PROCESS WAS NOT DEAD AND THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT IT
BE KEPT GOING. IN THAT REGARD, HE HAD JUST MET WITH
SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AND WOULD BE GOING TO
DAMASCUS JAN 23 FOR MORE TALKS.

8. ARAB LEAGUE RENEWAL OF ADF MANDATE: BOUTROS REFERRED
SEVERAL TIMES TO WORD JUST RECEIVED FROM TUNIS REGARDING
THE RENEWAL BY THE ARAB LEAGUE OF THE MANDATE OF THE
ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (NOW ALL SYRIAN) IN LEBANON FOR AN
ADDITIONAL SIX MONTHS. HE SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIA, OMAN,
KUWAIT AND SUMALIA HAD NOT PARTICIPATED AND THAT IRAQ,
SUDAN AND JORDAN HAD EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS. BOUTROS
THOUGHT THIS WAS EXTREMELY SIGNIFICANT AND LINKED IT
TO GROWING ARAB DISILLUSIONMENT WITH SYRIAN ACTIONS
IN LEBANON.

DILLON

END OF MESSAGE

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